

This is a statement by:  
Dan Martinez of Claremont, California  
June 25, 1957

There were 12 in my family; my mother and father and 10 children. Beginning In June every year we would go out to harvest the crops, returning in December. I would have to try to complete two semesters work in school in one semester. We began going out in 1940, when I was twelve years old, and went each year through 1948. My father died in 1942 and from that time on I was the head of the family. There usually 3 of us picking, while the younger childred were taken care of by my mother. In a few crops, such as the certain type of fig, the little children could help out too. I have picked probably any crop that you could name: figs, tomatoies, lettuce, grapes, prunes, apricots, cotton, oranges, and lemons. I have picked in teh San Joaquin Valley and in the Sacramento Valey; around Napa, around Cupertion; in the Salinas Valley; around Santa Paula; and of course right around here. About the only place in California where I haven't worked I suppose is in teh Imperial Valley.

We used to make good money. We would get up before daybreak, begin work at dawn at 4:30 or so and we could knock off around 2 in teh afternoon when it began to get really hot. I was able to amek \$25 a day in almost any crop that you could name. Of course, I wasn't an ordinary worker I suppose, I really applied myself,. You should have seen me run up and down those ladders. The family was able to make enough between June and December to carry us through the rest of the year in comfortable style.

The At least this was true during the early 1940's; but then things began to get tough. We had to compete with wetbacks and braceros. Those guys would get the good picking and we ould get the lousy orchards or we would get second and third pickings, you can't make any \$25 a day that way. The families coming in from Oklahoma and Texas were having the same trouble. The Mexican nationals were getting the cream of the crop and we were getting the cream of the crap. Naturally this made for hard feelings, we really hated those guys, although, I suppose it wasn't theri fault.



Another group we had to compete with were the prisoners-of-war, who were here in 1943, 1944 and 1945. There were some Germans, but mostly Italians. The growers paid them 35¢ an hour and the Federal Government provided the housing and the food and the medical care and so on. Naturally this made the growers very happy, because they were able to make much bigger profits. I suppose if I had been in their place I would have done exactly the same thing.

Nowadays, you will find very few of the local people who used to go up into the San Joaquin Valley and follow the crops still going up there. But that is due, of course, to the fact that it is easier now to get jobs in industry. But the large part of it is due to the fact we simply cannot compete with the Braceros and plenty of hardship has resulted. You take a family like ours, although, there aren't too many of them left with 10 children; only one or two would be able to get jobs in industry because of age requirements; citizenship requirements and so forth. And one or two wage earners can't support a family that large.

I happen to know that there are still plenty of wetbacks in the upper San Joaquin Valley. It makes a lot of difference where you are. As soon as you get north of the Tehachapi Mountains, it is easier to stay illegal. I have an uncle who has a 350 acres of tomatoes near Davis. He hires nothing but wetbacks. He says it is too much trouble toomuch red tape to hire the contract workers and he refuses to join an association. As far as domestic workers are concerned, he says he can't get them. I will say this for him, he treats his workers fairly and pays them good wages. Do you know who supplies him with these wetbacks? The local sheriff. He has no trouble with the authorities. His ranch is very hard to get to, with nothing but dirt roads, so he keeps his wetbacks as long as he wants to.

At the present time I am going for a Master's Degree in Latin American affairs at the Claremont Graduate School. I am particularly interested in U.S.-Mexico relations. I hope this can be the subject for my thesis. I am currently



trying to write up a research project for my thesis, which will be acceptable to my committee. I am very much interested in the braceros problem, because this has a lot to do with the U.S.-Mexico relations. in recent years. The trouble is I haven't been able to find the references in the library. Another thing is my faculty committee, when they tealk about U.S.-Mexico relations they are thinking about relations between the government. I am more interested in the relationships between the people. Just "plain Joes", guys like you and me. I feel I know something about this subject because I have known literally hundreds of braceros, even thousands. I have worked beside them in the fields. I have talked with them, I know how they think about things, and then naturally I am familiar with the other point of view. The Mexican-American point of view, also. If you see any specific research problem here which I can write up for my committee within a week and which I can complete during the summer I will sure appreciate it.